

Facility Will Support Agricultural Jobs and Economic Development Throughout Region

Liberty, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today joined with local officials to announce an \$800,000 federal investment to allow the construction of the Southern Catskills Red Meat Processing Facility to move forward. Hinchey was instrumental in securing the \$800,000 in funding, which was awarded through the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to the Sullivan County Industrial Development Agency (IDA).

"This federal investment will create jobs, promote economic development in our area, and most importantly, help local family farms stay in business and grow," Hinchey said. "Federal investments such as this one are so critical to supporting regional agriculture, which remains an important industry throughout the region and our state. It is vital that we continue to invest in programs that promote family farms and the economic opportunities they bring to rural areas such as Sullivan County."

The facility is expected to support the creation of more than 50 new agricultural jobs and three to five direct jobs at the plant itself. At a time when consumer interest has grown dramatically in local food production and naturally-raised livestock, Sullivan County and the Catskills are well-poised to tap the expanding markets for these products, particularly in the New York Metropolitan area where restaurants and farmers markets are helping to make the link from farm to table for agricultural products from our region. Currently, farmers in Sullivan County and surrounding counties in the Hudson Valley have to travel two to four hours one way to bring livestock to market, often having to wait months just to be scheduled for processing.

"Demand for a food processing facility in the region is high," said U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development John Fernandez. "This EDA grant will help to expand the region's livestock production sector to create new jobs and leverage private investment."

The new \$800,000 EDA investment will be added to two previously announced federal investments made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in order to begin construction on the \$1.7 million, 5,000 square foot food processing facility. Hinchey was able to secure \$175,000 from USDA in 2005, along with an additional \$50,000 in 2009 in large part due to Sullivan County's inclusion in the Sullivan-Wawarsing Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP)

Zone that Hinchey worked to establish in 1999.

"The Red Meat Facility has been in the planning phase for years," said Elwin Wood. "Many individuals have worked very hard on this project. Once completed, this facility will become a vital part of Sullivan County's economy by generating jobs, making the processing of red meat more economical for our local farmers, as well as providing a convenient location, thus keeping business within the county. The grant monies secured by Congressman Hinchey has made this dream a reality. As chairman of the Sullivan County IDA, I want to thank the congressman for securing the \$800,000 necessary to fund this project. Without the Congressman's hard work and support, this project would not be possible."

"The lack of a meat processing plants is a growing problem for small farmers in our region and across the nation," said Jonathan Rouis, Chairman of the Sullivan County Legislature, which has committed \$150,000 to the project. "Sullivan County is committed to its agricultural community and is stepping in to help our local farmers answer the demand for locally raised meat."

"I thank Congressman Hinchey for his assistance with obtaining this grant which will enable this important project to begin construction," said Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther. "I was proud to secure funding for the initial phase of the project back in 2004 and now along with Empire State Development's support, this project will become a reality for our region's livestock farmers."

Empire State Development (ESD) Chairman & CEO Dennis M. Mullen noted, "Today's announcement is wonderful news for Sullivan County. A red meat processing facility will improve the local economy for farmers throughout the Hudson Valley who are currently traveling upwards of two hours to process meats that are for USDA certification. Governor Paterson and Empire State Development are committed to making these types of strategic investments, which is estimated to retain 50 livestock production jobs and benefit 200 existing farms. Thanks to the support of Congressman Hinchey, this important project can move forward, promoting economic development for the region and helping our Sullivan County businesses thrive."

"In 2004, the Sullivan County Agricultural Local Development Corp. (AgLDC) was formed to aid farmers provide value added services so the farmers could market their products at higher prices therefore making the farms more profitable," said Robert Kaplan who chairs the AgLDC. "This red meat facility is the top priority of the AgLDC and thankfully with the help of the County, the IDA, and Congressman Hinchey's Office, the AgLDC's dream will become a reality."

Village of Liberty Mayor Richard Winters added, "We're very pleased to see new industry coming to the Village of Liberty that can also support the surrounding farm community."

Hinchey was instrumental in obtaining the REAP designation for Sullivan County, which recognizes only five areas around the country experiencing economic distress by giving priority to grants and loans from USDA, and just last year was successful in extending the designation for an additional four years.

The project will begin construction next spring and be completed sometime during 2012.